

Statement

FOR: U.S. House of Representatives
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

China Hearing for Foreign Affairs Committee Wednesday, July 23rd

Full Committee
Howard L. Berman (D-CA), Chairman

Oversight Hearing:

China on the Eve of the Olympics

Rayburn Office Building
Room 2172
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Thank you Chairman Berman, Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and distinguished members of the House Foreign Relations Committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to address you today. As you know, between May 4 and June 4 of this year, I walked 500 miles from Boston to Washington DC to express my gratitude to the U.S. Government and to the American people for their courageous support during my imprisonment in China. Because of this support, I am here today a free man in this great hall of democracy, speaking freely. I will speak not for myself, but for the thousands, yes tens of thousands, of my countrymen who cannot speak because they are either full of fear, in jail, or dead for what I will be doing today. Speaking freely. I will never forget the great compassion of America. And I ask you never to forget, or underestimate, the powerful voice for freedom that is America. It is because of you that I am free. And it will be with your continued support, that someday soon all the people of China will be free. Thank you.

You have asked me to address two issues today: 1) To give my perspective on China's foreign and domestic relations in the context of the upcoming Olympic Games. 2) To provide a perspective on what China's behavior tells the world about the nature of China's political development and how China will conduct its foreign relations going forward.

First, my perspective on China's foreign and domestic relations in the context of the upcoming Olympic Games. It is moot to discuss whether or not the Olympic Games should have been awarded to China. The vast scope of the Chinese government's systematic abuse of its citizens has been well documented and is well known to the committee members. The Chinese government's promises back in 2001 to improve its human rights record are also well known. The fact that the Chinese government has actually intensified its disregard for the civil and human rights of its citizens in the lead up to the Olympics is also well known.

This desperate crackdown on its citizens and its blatant disregard for its commitments to the international community speak loudly about how the CCP views the Olympic Games and its role as the governing body in China. The Chinese government wants to host the Olympics so it can use the pageantry and the equity of the Olympic rings to project an image of China under its rule as a great, stable, and harmonious society. For the Chinese government, the Olympic games are nothing more than a tool for orchestrating a thin veneer of harmony over a society that, underneath, is a cauldron of frustration, disillusionment, discontent, and fear. It is sweet irony that the numerous recent protests, crackdowns, and natural disasters made even worse by government corruption, have repeatedly punched through this veneer to reveal images of a Chinese society that is more like "One World, One Nightmare" rather than its official line of "One World, One Dream". In this regard, the lead up to the Olympics has been somewhat of a media disaster for the CCP.

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The Chinese government needs the Olympics to project an image of legitimacy to the world and to its people. However, its actions clearly reveal how corrupt and illegitimate the Chinese government really is. It knows it has no ideology to offer its people. It knows it rules by fear. And its actions tell us it will do anything to any of its people, and tell anything to the outside world to maintain its hold on power. The Chinese government's position as an Olympic host gives us the right, if not the duty to hold China accountable. Even at this hour, the United States and the world democracies can leverage the Chinese government's desperate need to have a successful Olympics to engage in a constructive and assertive dialogue regarding its human rights record and its persecution of minorities. At the very least, President Bush should demand the release of political prisoners as a condition for his attending the opening ceremonies. President Bush should also work in concert with other world leaders to develop a coordinated strategy of conditional participation in the Olympics tied to specific and measurable actions by the Chinese government. We should have no fear in doing this because the Chinese government needs President Bush at the Olympics much, much more than President Bush needs to be there. Such a coordinated strategy will also send a powerful message of support for the many courageous Chinese citizens inside and outside of Chinese jails who are putting their lives, their families, and their fortunes at risk every day to advance the cause of liberty. Finally, I urge all of you and all the national and international press to remember the climate of fear and repression we have seen in the events that have preceded the Olympic Games. We have seen the repression of the Tibetan protests. We have heard of the arrest and intimidation of numerous journalists and human rights activists. We have witnessed the agony of parents in Sichuan province who know that their school-aged children would be alive today if it were not for the government corruption that allowed schools in a known earthquake zone to be built to substandard codes. Do not forget this as the carefully orchestrated Olympic festivities unfold. Journalists may be free to move around Beijing and ask anything of the people they meet. **But the true test of a society is whether people are free to respond.** This is clearly not the case in China today.

I will conclude by giving my perspective on the most important issue: **What China's behavior tells the world about China's political development and how China will conduct its foreign relations going forward.**

In his brilliant book, "The Case for Democracy", noted Soviet dissident, Natan Sharansky, states that governments, which rule by fear, are inherently unstable. The world community cannot rely on leaders who do not rely or trust their own people. The government of China remains a one-party totalitarian system, driven by the fear of losing power and committed to the use of fear to incapacitate any person or organization, which it deems a threat to its illegitimate hold on power. The hope of many people that political openness in China will follow economic progress is an illusion. Structurally, the Chinese government is organized to maintain its absolute power at the expense of its citizens. For example, The Chinese constitution admits the CCP as the only legitimate ruling power in China. Therefore anyone who speaks against the Government is subject to charges of treason. The Chinese constitution establishes that the judiciary reports directly to the Chinese Communist Party. The CCP tells the judges who is guilty and what sentences to give. Trials are no more than preordained showpieces. People have no means of redress. This is why, according to the Human Rights Watch Report of 2007, there are more than 100,000 protests against the government each year in China. This is remarkable, given the great risk people assume for participating in these protests.

The Chinese government will continue to rule by fear. It knows no other way. The CCP will continue to invest inordinate amounts of resources into controlling the population through fear, hatred, and division. It will make demons of the Tibetans, It will make terrorists of the Uyghurs. It will make subversives of Christians and Falun Gong practitioners. This control will stifle political, social, and ultimately economic development and increase social unrest. As unrest grows, it will export its fear abroad to create enemies or situations that rally the people at home under the banner of nationalism. It will use its economic clout to intimidate and induce foreign governments and organizations to capitulate to its rule by fear. We need not look further than the case of Yahoo, whose executives capitulated to the Chinese Government by turning over private emails which the government used to send a young man to prison. We need not look any further than Flushing, NY where peaceable demonstrators were attacked by mobs incited by the Chinese government. Sowing fear, discord, and instability wherever it sees threats will be the underlying modus operandi of the Chinese Government's foreign policy.

Strong and sustained American support for human rights in China is not only the morally correct position it is strategically the right approach for advancing American interests. America cannot

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allow its great way of life to be subverted by fear. It is important to realize that China needs the approval of the world community to legitimize its power. It is important to realize that China needs its economic engine to mollify its citizens. We need not be afraid to challenge the Chinese government on its human rights record. Indeed, it is in our strategic interest to do so. China will respond. It will continue to do business with us regardless of our challenges, because it needs the approval of the world community and integration with the world economy to maintain a veneer of legitimacy.

At *Initiatives for China* we are working very hard as catalysts for peaceful and incremental change by helping Chinese citizens exercise their citizen power or *GongMin LiLiang* in Chinese. It is this display of citizen power that will ultimately overcome the corruption and the fear induced by the CCP. It is *GongMin LiLiang* that ultimately will drive China toward a more open, just, and democratic society.

America's strong, vocal and consistent support will send a powerful and enabling message to this struggle for peaceful change. And, when the time comes, the tipping point if you will, for decisive action, the American government must be prepared to give the right signals in defense of freedom so the forces for freedom and democracy will prevail for the good of China- For the good of the Chinese government and for the good of America and the international community.

If the committee will be so kind, I will conclude by telling you a story that was told to me by a fellow inmate while I was in prison. This story speaks to the depth of the frustration of my countrymen and the hope that America holds for them. A young man was sentenced to death for a minor crime. He spent many years on death row in China. The night before he was executed he said to a fellow inmate, "If I am to be reborn, I shall look outside first. If I see the Chinese flag over the land, I will refuse to be born. However, if I see an American flag waving in the blue sky, I will gladly leap into the world.

Thank you

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